

WASHINGTON POST

AUGUST 11, 1964

25 YEAR RE-REVIEW

STAT

Inside Report . . By Rowland Evans and Robert Novak

The Yarmolinsky Sacrifice

When the antipoverty bill sailed through the House last Saturday in President Johnson's greatest legislative triumph, a good many Democratic Congressmen did not join in the jubilation.

The truth is that they doubt that the bill, an expensive grabbag of new and old spending programs, will prove an effective battle plan against poverty. Many Democrats supported it only out of election-year loyalty to the President.

What really rankled the liberal Democrats in the House, however, was the price that Mr. Johnson thought necessary to pay for the bill. To get support from conservative Southerners, he practiced human sacrifice.

The sacrificial victim was Adam Yarmolinsky, a dynamic Administration trouble-shooter who was chief midwife in the hurried birth of the poverty program. Contrary to the President's claim at his Saturday news conference that Yarmolinsky never left his duties as a Defense Department administrator, he actually joined the poverty task force months ago and was scheduled to be deputy director of the program after the bill passed. In fact, he no longer has an office at the Pentagon.

YARMOLINSKY, who has the misfortune of looking like the anarchist bomb thrower in old polit-



Novak

Evans

ical cartoons, is the subject of constant vilification by Gen. Edwin Walker, John Birch zealots and the fright peddlers. Charges of disloyalty are, of course, absurd. He has a public record of anticommunism and helped clear the Reds out of the American Veterans' Committee after the war.

The announcement that Yarmolinsky was being sacrificed came on the House floor. Rep. Phil M. Landrum of Georgia, floor manager of the poverty bill, declared that Yarmolinsky would have no part in administering the poverty program.

No sooner had Landrum taken his seat than a liberal Representative, surprised and infuriated, rushed up to ask what authority he had for this pledge. Landrum's reply, the authority came from President Johnson himself.

That night, indignant liberals who were the bill's strongest supporters met in the office of Rep. James G. O'Hara of Michigan. They could do nothing to save

Yarmolinsky at that stage. In their impotence, they sent an ultimatum to the White House warning that they would tolerate no more such concessions.

Though it all came as a surprise to the liberals, Southerners — particularly the North Carolina delegation — had been demanding Yarmolinsky's scalp as the price of voting for the bill. R. Sargent Shriver, the antipoverty chief, resisted to the end. He was overruled by President Johnson after top House leaders warned him: Yarmolinsky or the bill; take your choice.

IRONICALLY, the sacrifice was not necessary. By adopting amendments satisfying the conservationist bloc headed by Rep. John P. Saylor (R-Pa.), the number of Republicans backing the bill climbed from 5 to 22. Moreover, Mr. Johnson used all his businessman friends, including such personages as the president of the Pennsylvania Railroad, to put the heat on Republicans.

One liberal Republican Congressman, who regards the bill as a hopeless hodgepodge, was pressured by calls from Republican industrialists and newspaper editors in his district. None of them had the slightest idea what was in the bill, but all urged his support. Deciding discretion was the better part of valor, he ended up voting for it.

But the Yarmolinsky sacrifice was a natural culmination of the frenzied manner in which the poverty bill had been pushed from the beginning. Mr. Johnson had an understandable desire to push through Congress one major bill that had his own, not John F. Kennedy's, imprint. Above all the other bills, this was "must" legislation.

It was this desire that led to the hasty assembling of the poverty package last winter despite grave misgivings within the Cabinet. In turn, it had led to a crisis atmosphere at the White House last week that had nothing to do with Viet-Nam, the roughest White House lobbying since the Rules Committee fight of 1961, and — finally — the sacrifice of Adam Yarmolinsky.

© 1964, Publishers Newspaper Syndicate